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ABSTRACT

These eight papers highlight implications of the 1985 Unesco Conference for adult educators involved with nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). The papers were prepared as a contribution to the discussion and follow-up of the conference proceedings. "Unesco Conference Poses New Expectations for the Adult Education Movement and ICAE (International Council for Adult Education)" (Paul Belanger) discusses two categories of implications--support for Unesco programs and new expectations for adult education. "Educate the Politicians; Politicize the Educators" (Margaret Gayfer) focuses on the sharper recognition of the value of NGOs in the development and provision of adult education and two interconnected implications: the use of NGOs as an umbrella term for the wide variety of such groups and the lack of critique and discussion of the complementary role of NGOs. "Non-Governmental Adult Education Organizations: An Overview Perspective" (Chris Duke) provides an overview of where NGOs have come from and where they appear to be heading. "Some Practical Points for NGOs" (Therese Shak) presents implications for NGOs from the point of view of practicality in the areas of aims and policies; special needs of groups; formal and nonformal sectors; program and technology; methods, means, and techniques; training of personnel; resources; coordination and cooperation; development, research, planning, and evaluation; and literacy. "New Trends and Developments" (Arthur Stock) addresses some tendencies in the process of educating adults, such as the increasing importance of adult education, the importance of NGOs, literacy as a universal necessity, and international and regional cooperation. "Questions of Goals for Adult Education" (Ana Krajnc) considers three general tendencies: to narrow the function of adult education to only economic goals, to reduce the financial resources for adult education, and to make education more "elitist." "The Role of Government in Literacy" (David Macharia) compares government programs with NGO programs. "Implications for North Americans" (John Niemi) considers the implications of the withdrawal of the United States from Unesco and the role of Canada. A "Declaration on the Right to Learn" is attached. (YLB)

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MAKING THE CONNECTION

The Adult Education Movement and the 4th Unesco Conference

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The International Council for Adult Education

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The International Council for Adult Education

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Unesco Conference Poses New Expectations for the Adult Education Movement and ICAE

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Until November 1985, Paul Bélanger was Vice-President (North America) of the International Council for Adult Education.

The meaning of the 1985 Unesco Conference for the adult education movement and in particular for the International Council for Adult Education (ICAE) is to be found in the complementary nature of the recent (1972-1985) series of governmental and non-governmental international meetings on adult education. Four years after the 1972 Unesco Conference in Tokyo—at which Roby Kidd presented a plan for an international adult education organization—ICAE held its first conference, on 'Adult Education and Development,' in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. Its second conference was held in Paris in 1982, with the theme of 'Adult Education: Towards an Authentic Development.'

The significance of the ICAE and Unesco conferences lies in the growing awareness of the need for change: the transformations that need to take place at all levels if economic and socio-cultural development is ever to become more participatory and thus more effective.

In all these conferences adult educators did insist on the many dimensions of 'the right to learn'; we stressed adult education as an essential prerequisite for integral development; and we expressed clear commitment for promoting such a movement. But this very commitment rapidly faced us with another

question: *how to do it*? How indeed, to ensure that adult education will play its vital role in the present critical period? Within this perspective, the implications of the 1985 Unesco Conference for ICAE are numerous, both in terms of support for Unesco programs and as a demonstration of new expectations placed on the adult education movement and on the Council.

SUPPORT FOR UNESCO ACTIVITIES

□ ICAE can make a significant contribution in helping governmental agencies to become more aware of the role of adult education. One way is to increase their consciousness of the actions required to fully implement the 1976 *Unesco Recommendation on the Development of Adult Education*. ICAE should support the Conference's recommendation for the establishment of a procedure for periodic reports by Member States. Through its member associations, ICAE should stress to governments that the *Recommendation* will have no effect in strengthening adult education as long as no procedure exists for regular reporting on implementation.

□ *The Declaration on the Right to Learn*, initiated by ICAE and adopted as the Declaration of the Conference, catches the essence of what adult education means for a real and authentic development, and should be studied and used by adult educators. Posters should be printed to make this adult education charter known at all levels and in all regions of the world.

□ Specific attention to the implementation of *Paid Education Leave* is one of the significant measures put forward by the Conference to ensure greater accessibility to study and training, and thus enable people to face the challenge of technological and social change in the world of work. Two recommendations emphasized this fact. Member States were asked to make additional efforts to promote the realization of educational leave and to support measures to offer comparable educational opportunities to those not in the work force, especially the unemployed. Unesco was asked to organize special meetings that would assist Member States in establishing educational leave.

ICAE and its members are well situated to help Unesco and the International Labour Organization to promote these recommendations among such non-governmental groups as trade unions, cooperatives, voluntary bodies and women's organizations.

□ A special priority to *literacy in adult education programs* received a clear and repeated emphasis, with priority attention going to young people, women and disadvantaged rural and urban adults. This emphasis, and its attendant recommendations, has particular revelance for ICAE member associations and networks. Repeated attention was given during the Conference to the global nature of illiteracy as shown in the recognition by industrialized countries of serious functional illiteracy among native-born adults and young people. There was consensus that literacy and basic education be incorporated into comprehensive development plans that acknowledge the necessary cooperation between

official and popular efforts. In terms of 'development,' there is a role for ICAE to help in explaining the important relationship between literacy and development.

The Conference's recommendation that member states provide the necessary resources to achieve universal access to literacy and basic education makes it imperative for decision-makers to become better acquainted with evidences of the socio-economic returns of resources spent on literacy and adult education, and become more knowledgeable about the conditions needed for such an impact to be achieved. Without such rigorous 'socio-economic' advocacy—which ICAE, among others, is taking—appeals for priority to literacy will have no meaning.

NEW EXPECTATIONS FOR ADULT EDUCATION

All recommendations of the Unesco Conference show increasing expectations on the adult education movement and on ICAE. Four areas stand out: peace, women, popular education and international cooperation.

☐ *Education for Peace* was a constant theme. Nevertheless, difficulties exist in approaching this task, bearing in mind the active conception of peace and peace education in relation to social justice and human rights. The Peace Education Network of ICAE can play a leadership role in several areas. These include the development of a more profound meaning of peace education; working out ways to do this in a non-aligned and profoundly international manner; and recognizing the key role that women are playing and will have to play in relating peace education to a new vision of a more humane society.

☐ The Conference stressed *the role of women* in the development of adult education. It was recommended that special attention be given to programs specifically aimed at giving women the same educational opportunity as men and at providing the knowledge and training necessary for their active participation in community and national affairs and in their own social and economic development.

But the Conference did not go very far in the direction of spelling out the precise and distinctive contributions of women both in the advancement of education and in the definition of a new social project that can influence the orientation of adult education activities. Little was said about the conditions required for women to have the educational tools they need in order to give new impetus to the development of adult education. In this context, ICAE's Women's Network is a key area for innovation and exchange.

☐ The dynamic relation between *formal adult education and popular education* is another significant area for the adult education movement and ICAE.

Some of the key problems raised during the Conference may find some answers in the diverse and innovative practices used by popular educators in different countries. Indeed, the development of adult education is facing a range of problems and challenges, such as the low level of participation of adult

students, the development of appropriate technology like community radio and popular theatre, the need for a comprehensive approach to curriculum development, the dynamics of education and action, and reaching out to community and grassroots needs.

Problems like these are now finding new solutions in the various practices of popular education. Since popular education was the animating focus of ICAE's World Assembly of Adult Education, held in Buenos Aires, November 1985, the Council is in a unique position to make more visible the important contribution of popular education as a genuine milieu of innovation and renewal.

□ *International cooperation* was a major subject at the Conference and participants developed some conditions for real international cooperation in adult education. Such cooperation was identified as being efficient when it has the following characteristics: (1) bi-directional through the sharing of experiences and information; (2) open to all fields of adult education, not only to sectors that get more financial support; (3) horizontal and reciprocal, multi-lateral as well as bilateral, governmental and non-governmental; (4) international also in the sense of being regional and subregional; (5) focused on world priorities like the major literacy plans being developed by different regions of the world.

In all of this, the Council's contribution is self-evident. In the present context where international cooperation is being developed more and more along the bilateral pattern, the diversified and reciprocal approach put forward by the Conference is more of a project than a reality, and yet, at the same time, a small and growing reality. In that respect, ICAE should stress more than ever its priorities and continue to support horizontal exchanges of experiences, innovations, information and people.

The development of international solidarity among all women and men in the crucial struggle for authentic and participatory development will constitute the most useful contribution of the Council towards the implementation of both the letter and the spirit of the Unesco Conference, its recommendations and its Declaration on the Right to Learn.

Educate the Politicians; Politicize the Educators

Margaret Gayfer, Editor, Convergence

From its intriguing mixture of political tensions, consensus on global priorities, unexpectedly large turnout, often frustrating formality, and strong presence of adult educators involved with non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the Fourth Unesco International Conference on Adult Education came through with three significant messages: reaffirmation by governments of the centrality of adult education in social and economic development, increased acknowledgement of the 'irreplaceable role' of NGOs, and endorsation of The Right to Learn, the declaration of the conference. The 1985 Paris meeting was the largest and most representative of Unesco's three previous conferences: 841 delegates from 122 member states and 59 NGOs and associated institutions (compared to the 1972 Tokyo conference's 364 participants from 82 countries and 37 NGOs. The surprisingly large attendance at a time of retenchment was impressive evidence of international support for adult education and for Unesco and continuance of its adult education programs and conferences.

The most recurring theme was the sharper recognition of the value of NGOs in the development and provision of adult education in all its forms. Rarely did member states fail to emphasize the importance of the voluntary and NGO sector and its 'complementary' role. A key recommendation urged governments to develop more cooperation with NGOs and to provide them with technical and financial support. Even without this formal recognition, NGOs were represented by a strong and visible core of 'real' adult educators, attending as members of government delegations or as delegates of the International Council for Adult Education or its regional member associations. These women and men demonstrated the contribution of NGOs by giving substance to discussions and recommendations, working to defuse tensions, and taking part in the open consultations to draft the declaration on The Right to Learn. NGO initiatives and activities — a kind of sub-conference — created a growing sense of adult education as a cohesive 'movement' capable of finding and using its own voice.

Since the conference has no followup mechanism, adult education organizations have a responsibility to put the report and The Right to Learn on their agendas and use the important statements and recommendations as an advocacy and decision-making tool with governments so that concrete actions

result. Vigilance is needed also to ensure that adult education does not disappear as a specific entity from Unesco's program and that the next world conference does take place. These conferences are politically significant for the advance of adult education since they are the only forum for governments to meet, discuss policy and arrive at agreement on priorities, and, one hopes, to learn about adult education. They also provide a rare occasion for adult educators to work and argue with government officials, and, one hopes, to become more politically aware of way to influence policy. *"Educate the politicians; politicize the educators"* remains a central message.

This message also relates to two interconnected implications of the conference: the use of "non-governmental organizations" as an umbrella term for the wide variety of such groups, and, as applicable to all countries; and the lack of critique and discussion of the 'complementary' role of NGOs.

There are substantial variations in the role, objectives and activities of groups that function separately from governments or that have some degree of "arm's length" autonomy (which I call NGOs, for convenience.) Such NGOs are growing in number and stature — and, significantly, include women's organizations — and represent different forms and purposes, from work at the grassroots to advocacy at national, regional and international levels. Failure to recognize this variety makes mockery of catch-phrases about the 'irreplaceable role' of NGOs. In some countries NGOs are tolerated as cheap solutions to failed government programs; in others they exist to carry out government policy under the guise of participation; in some they are the main voice of dissent; in others they are upholders of democratic forces; in still others they are threats to power structures.

The 'complementary' relationship between NGOs and governments or international and regional intergovernmental bodies is, necessarily, marked by vigilance and tension. Only if the autonomy and expertise of NGOs is respected can tension be creative and fruitful. Who can do what best, where and why, requires continual analysis. The growth of NGOs in adult, nonformal and popular education poses the need to support the voice of adult education everywhere and to listen to the advocacy message of those engaged working for social change. While 'complementary' roles are important, more and more NGOs are not content with supplementing the efforts of the state. Somewhat as a "third forum", they see their role as initiating project and advocating what needs to be done. For both the complementary and initiating roles, NGOs must individually, and as coalitions, find their own ways between flexibility and bureaucracy, between large and small, between broad impact and low-level, between cooperation with governments and resistance to take-over attempts.

Non-Governmental Adult Education Organizations: An Overview Perspective

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Until recently, Dr. Duke was Secretary-General of the Asian and South Pacific Bureau of Adult Education, and Associate Secretary-General of the International Council for Adult Education.

Views differ about how long adult education has existed; some argue, persuasively, that it is an institution or at least a practice as old as human history. Adult education associations as here understood are, however, a very recent phenomenon. A few might legitimately claim a life of half a century and more, but most national associations are quite new. They vary considerably in purposes, constitutions, structure, membership and activities. Some are strongly established and quite stable, whereas others display instability by frequent changes of constitution, leadership and perhaps membership, focus and activity. At the national level there is a quite bewildering diversity and, to the outside observer, confusion in the non-governmental adult education association scene: thus Canada appears relatively logical and stable with its anglophone and francophone bodies, whereas the range of organizations and relationships in the United States can bemuse the uninitiated.

Regionally and internationally—as one might logically expect—such associations are in the main yet more new and, often, still less stable. The European Bureau of Adult Education is the granddaddie despite its recent (1953) origins. The Asian and South Pacific Bureau of Adult Education only has come of age (21 years) since the Third Unesco Conference. In Latin America, a new, more vigorous association is growing up where an earlier body had become inactive. In Africa, two regional bodies (for adult education and for literacy) recently have merged in an attempt to sustain viability in the difficult circumstances of that continent. Another region with a strong British legacy, the Caribbean, also enjoys a relatively secure and stable regional association of recent origin. On the other hand, the Pacific part of the Asian-Pacific region has yet to find the right formula for that huge and sparsely-peopled ocean area. And the Arab world, with its two regional intergovernmental bodies, ALECSO

and ARLO, does not have a strictly non-governmental regional association at all. Indeed, close questioning of the nature and status of national associations, for example in the Asian region, would raise questions about their truly non-governmental character.

Finally, at the international (as distinct from regional) level, there has only been a viable and credible international non-governmental organization in existence for barely a decade. The International Council for Adult Education (ICAE) was the brainchild of Roby Kidd, who used the occasion of Unesco's Third Conference (Tokyo, 1972) to launch the idea and the network. By the time of ICAE's first international conference in Tanzania in 1976, it was clear that an effective international adult education organization had been formed.

Thus 1985 was the first occasion when a Unesco-organized international conference in the lineage from Elsinore (1949) to Paris had the partnership and support of an effective international non-governmental organization, backed up by regional NGOs of varying character and strength from most regions, and underpinned by close on 100 national bodies of still more varied character, history and identity. On the other side, Unesco, which enjoys the same post-war vintage as the European Bureau of Adult Education, was hosting its Fourth International Conference on Adult Education under the most difficult circumstances: a challenge to its moral basis for existence and a threat to its continuation for which the Conference provided one of the more significant platforms, and battle grounds, of a most critical year for survival.

□ Nature and Growth of NGOs

Any attempted overview which ignores the context both of Unesco itself and more especially, if less obviously, of the state of organization and development of the non-governmental adult education scene, cannot be helpful in appraising what has been achieved and what might happen from now on. This stock-taking should not overlook one other aspect of non-governmental associations—their relative culture-specificity. Whereas one can argue persuasively that almost every human society has included one or another form of adult education—the transmission of norms, values, skills and knowledge to older members as distinct from the young, through a variety of institutions, religious and secular—the particular institutional form and value system suggested by 'non-governmental association' tends to belong to the West, and to the kind of newer tradition of those Third World countries, especially of the British Commonwealth, which have adapted 19th century (usually) British (usually) forms more or less changed from the originals, to meet their own contemporary needs.

More recently there has been a tendency for adult education internationalism to exert pressure and persuasion on countries outside this particular set of traditions and without these legacies to create somewhat look-alike national adult education non-governmental organizations which will grant them ease of access to the international non-governmental adult education movement and its

activities. Although the bulk of public expenditure in different countries goes on government programs, the sense of community and movement rests mainly with the NGOs at various levels, so the pressure can be powerful. As ICAE, in particular, has been highly successful in raising funds for international meetings and for various transnational programs and networks, the pressure to join through minimal conformity to the NGO norm has increased.

This does not imply that non-governmental adult education associations are undesirable. It does attempt to put their nature and growth in context: it is very impressive, very recent, very shallow-rooted in most cases and, with certain pressures and sanctions which, although undeliberately, may be seen as having a slight flavour of cultural imperialism. (One measure of the longer term viability of this international movement probably will be the extent to which non-governmental associations in countries with different traditions can acquire anchorage in the old and new traditions of those countries and regions—Islamic, Buddhist, socialist, Melanesian, and so on.)

□ Context of Paris 1985

We now turn briefly to the Fourth International Conference in Paris. NGOs had a very high profile, especially through ICAE but also through several regional association delegations and influences, and through the overt and covert influence of national associations within many country delegations. It was fitting that ICAE itself was conceived at the previous major Unesco coming together at Tokyo in 1972.

The Paris context differed from the Tokyo context in ways sketched above, but also for larger reasons. In 1972 the optimism of continuous economic growth and full employment in the industrialized world had yet to collapse into the persisting complex of international economic problems which overshadow almost everything in the public sector, national and international, in 1985. In 1972, also, the belief still held that a Development Decade or two could put the Third World to rights and at least turn the tide in favour of equalization between North and South. The rhetoric is still there, and possibly new well-springs of popular hope and energy; nonetheless, 1985 is the year of the famine. The crisis of survival for Unesco is perhaps best understood as a symptom of a wider malaise: the end of growth and of optimism which voted in the governments threatening the future of Unesco. (One can ask whether the Fourth International Conference, and the NGO contribution thereto, did not marginally ease the situation and enhance the Organization's credibility.)

If this is the context of the Fourth International Conference, what are the implications for adult education NGOs, in relation to Unesco and more broadly? In both senses, there are pressing needs, new demands and new opportunities. How far can the NGO tradition in adult education respond?

So far as Unesco is concerned, a new kind of partnership and complementarity is implied. The launching of ICAE's first General Assembly under its revised constitution in the refitted great hall of Unesco in October 1982 was

symbolic. Close though personal affinities may be (the common influence of the philosophy of Nyerere, for example) there are severe stresses at times. Unesco is the servant of its Member States—of all political persuasions and always political. ICAE is a flexible, quite radical, freewheeling small organization most loosely directed by its country membership with great freedom to lead from the Secretariat. This makes for strains between the respective ICAE and Unesco secretariats, possibly exacerbated as one gains in stature and confidence while the other struggles to retain standing within an embattled and contracting yet overly bureaucratized international governmental organization. (The partnership is demonstrated more positively at the less politicized and bureaucratized regional level where, in Asia at any rate, professional partnership and cooperation are strong, and well founded in mutual respect and appreciation.)

Some have suggested that ICAE should displace Unesco as-*the*-international adult education agency. This will occur de facto only in the unlikely event of the demise of Unesco. ICAE however cannot replace Unesco in terms of its adult education functions. The difference of charter, purpose and membership makes for complementarity (on a basis of equal partnership), not displacement.

The Fourth International Conference illustrates this. Adult educators, especially but not only of non-governmental persuasion, chafed at the bit: at the cumbersome time-wasting politically dictated rituals; at the non-educational and anti-educational proceedings where 300 cannot be a conversation; at the pernicious an intrusive influence of the political 'apparatchiks' of all persuasions sitting on the shoulders of most delegations and negating the dialogue of educators. However, this kind of gathering of 800, with its influential presences of ministers and senior officials, could not be afforded or convened by ICAE, and the resulting profiling of adult education nationally and internationally would not occur without the weight of Unesco as the assembly of nations.

On the other hand, much of what was good, and most of what was best, at Paris in 1985 was the work of non-governmental adult education associations, much of it orchestrated by ICAE members and manifested in the more inspirational and uplifting 'Right to Learn' adopted as the Declaration of the Conference. Only the non-governmental sector could have produced such a result. One might indeed speculate with some authority (as an elected Conference officer privileged to see some of the inner workings of the event from a secretariat perspective) that the Conference itself would have collapsed without the permeating and collaborative international non-governmental influence.

The senior officers of Unesco appeared to misread the nature of the community of adult educators, their level of commitment and professionalism. In their concern to steer the meeting into safe waters they sought to short-circuit the kind of deliberation and ordering of results required by the delegations, thereby bringing the Conference to the precipice of deadlock and disaster. It

took the professionalism of the non-governmental participants, straddling all parts of the political spectrum through personal ties and international loyalties, to underpin the work of professional adult educators in Unesco and secure a constructive outcome.

The Beginning of New Partnerships

Finally, the 1985 Conference illustrated the delicacy and finesse of the role which non-governmental adult educators are required to play if they join this game. The Right to Learn Declaration, triumph and climax of the whole Conference and a triumph for ICAE workers in particular, all but collapsed in a sour heap through a political misjudgment that appeared as clumsy sleight of hand, over the enlisting of sponsoring delegations. Non-governmental adult education associations now are poised to play a significant part in influencing governments in their adult education policies and practices in most parts of the world. It is not a league in which gaffes are easily forgiven. However, the growing sophistication of the international adult education movement, manifested through old and new associations at all levels, suggests that 1985 could signal the beginnings of new and constructive partnerships between non-governmental adult education and various of the family of United Nations organizations, among which Unesco should remain the natural leader.

More generally, non-governmental adult education associations could come to play more prominent roles in the planning of adult education in many countries; and not only those in the Anglo-Saxon and European traditions of voluntaryism. The Asian and South Pacific Bureau of Adult Education has found that national and regional NGOs can provide a means whereby the professional and social values and commitments of adult educators can be expressed with influence even upon quite difficult, apparently unsympathetic and ideologically unattractive, political systems. The same professional adult educator who is a senior government adult education officer in the week, sitting in a suit or a uniform of rank and directing quite massive human and material resources for adult education, can appear at weekends as a perceptive, radical, socially critical voluntary member of a local, national or regional NGO, and give a lead in the direction and spirit of Nyerere or Freire.

Even when a national association appears as an imported cultural artefact, a spot of cargo cultism to tap into the resources of ASPBAE and ICAE, it can acquire influence and value. Such associations can rapidly become quite significant change agents, conduits for ideas from abroad which, if the local soil is receptive, may take root and bear fruit quite quickly. There-*is*-a question of cultural invasion here, but it is less likely that radical (or other) innovations in adult education will take root and prove noxious than with most, especially consumer-oriented, imported institutions and value systems. And cultural invasion is more automatically guarded against by the participative character, the respect of persons, and the valuing of cultural diversity which, on the whole, characterize and distinguish the international community of adult education, and are mediated through its various levels of associations.

□ A Time to Take Stock

In summary, the Fourth Unesco International Conference provides a timely occasion, and vantage point, from which to take stock of where non-governmental adult education associations have come from, and where they appear to be heading. Their history is fleetingly brief. Their characteristics vary greatly, and their standing is commonly insecure. They reflect rather well the diversity of nations and systems for the arranging of human affairs around the world, yet share a measure of common values and purposes that is best referred to by the term professional(ism). The values underpinning this professionalism mean that adult education associations will tend to be detached from and critical of governments and their programs and creatures (within which one must include international governmental organizations like Unesco). Yet governments, as expressions of the needs of nations and peoples, need good adult educators and good adult education, possibly more than ever before.

The partnerships, tensions, compromises, stresses, and outcomes of the Fourth International Conference on Adult Education stand as a metaphor and a parable for non-governmental adult education associations in their new higher profile. If the associations can be clear-minded, purposeful, committed, tough-minded, modest and effective, they have a role to play altogether more important and influential than in even the best days of the past.

This overview has asserted that, for all their newness and fragility in many cases, non-governmental adult education associations have become established and come into their own, nationally, regionally and internationally, with national associations as the main building blocks. Ironically, their arrival was demonstrated at the Conference when the barely hidden agenda was the survival or otherwise of the host organization, Unesco, itself.

The contrast between the rigid formality of a politicized international governmental organization and the flexibility of an international non-governmental organization has also been suggested. Lest complacency be induced among non-governmental adult education associations by this characterization, the final note might be one of warning: to adult education associations in particular, not to ossify and become themselves closed bureaucratic organizations. Those working for regional and international adult eduction organizations have not infrequently encountered national association as rather cliquish, jealous bodies guarding their status and such small perks and privileges as adult education can offer, and acting as barriers and gatekeepers to new blood and new ideas among, for instance, younger and female adult educators in their respective countries.

It would be sad indeed if non-governmental adult education associations were to become tainted by this modest measure of influence and lose their capacity for openness, responsiveness and radicalism just when they are ready to fill the areas of these kinds which the international governmental organizations and other governmental bodies, by their very nature, find it hard or impossible to occupy.

Some Practical Points for NGOs

Therese Shak, Coordinator,
Caritas Continuing & Adult Education Service, Hong Kong

The increasing important role of non-governmental organizations and their 'undeniable potential' for promoting and carrying out adult education was emphasized repeatedly during the 1985 Unesco Conference in Paris. This fact was demonstrated by the significant increase in the number of NGOs taking part: 59 as compared to 37 at the 1972 Tokyo conference. The regional adult education associations were highly visible both in their concerns for regional issues and as members of national delegations. In his closing address, the Conference President, Dzingai B. Mutumbuka, Minister of Education of Zimbabwe, expressed gratitude to NGOs for adding a particular dimension of strong commitment and enthusiasm that had contributed extensively to the success of the Conference.

Reports from Member States and comments from individual delegates made clear that, if specific educational services are to be made available to adults on a regular basis and not in a haphazard and marginal fashion, the complementary nature of the roles and tasks of public and non-governmental bodies must be recognized and strengthened. The wide agreement on the irreplaceable role of NGOs as a driving force in adult education—especially through their orientation to community needs—was reflected in a practical recommendation concerning the role and contribution of NGOs. It was recommended that Member States 'develop and encourage co-operation among all government branches and non-governmental organizations involved in adult education and that non-governmental organizations be given technical and financial support.'

The following reflections on implications for non-governmental organizations are from the point of view of practicality rather than theory and idealism, and are presented in the context of my involvement with both a national and a regional Asian NGO and as head of the delegation of the Asian and South Pacific Bureau of Adult Education.

1. Aims and Policies

Non-governmental organizations should be very clear about their roles in the field of adult education. Why are they in adult education at all? What are their objectives when they decide to adopt adult education as the focus of their work? Commission I of the Conference identified a twofold objective for adult education — individual self-fulfillment and socio-economic

and cultural development—and four main functions: literacy, reduction of inequality, vocational training and retraining, and creativity and participation in cultural and political activities. This list is not exhaustive, but NGOs should have clear objectives if they are to obtain the desired results.

2. Special Needs of Groups

Repeatedly, attention was drawn to the needs of under-privileged groups such as women who are lacking in all-round development, young people lacking employment opportunities, the disabled in need of social, cultural and economic development, and the elderly who can be both teachers and learners. Since most NGOs are founded with humanitarian purposes, they should accord some positive discrimination for these groups. But it is also important for governments to realize that programs provided for these groups often are not viable since the participants usually cannot afford to pay fees, even for programs of a non-profit nature. Therefore, financial help should be given to NGOs providing programs for these groups.

3. Formal and Nonformal Sectors

A call was made to strengthen the link between formal and nonformal sectors of eduction so as to provide a better response to the changing needs of both training and employment and the development of the human personality. The possibilities open to NGOs to meet the various educational needs of the population were recognized since NGOs are community-oriented by nature and tend to make more efficient use of their resources. It was recommended that governments provide 'favourable conditions for action' by NGOs, and encourage all government branches to cooperate with NGOs involved in adult education. Since NGOs are mostly in the informal sector, it is important that they do not work alone but move in with the formal sector and with governments.

4. Program and Technology

A wealth of program types and formats were reported on by Conference participants. But emphasis was placed on new technology, especially those learning possibilities afforded by the computer. No doubt NGOs would be tempted into being up-to-date, and wish to launch into a new field of computer education. But caution was advocated by some delegates from both developing and industrialized countries. They stressed that the latest and most expensive technology was not always the best or the most practical and economic solution to an educational problem. New technologies change the role of the educators;. until that role is redefined and clear, technologies should wait. Yet, programs to promote computer literacy may be safe for NGOs as a new venture, although techology may not be timely to be launched in a big way.

Two other important points came out in relation to programs: the question of andragogy and of relevance. Andragogy means involving learners in program planning; relevance means planning programs that have been

tested as being relevant to the lives of the learners. These points have implications for NGOs, especially if they are accustomed to planning programs in a 'cafeteria style' with no direct participation from learners. Trying out a different planning style that involves learners may enlighten an organization about their real needs. In terms of relevance, programs for leisure may be as relevant as programs for job creation. Organizations should be sensitive to needs which are not always related to economic issues.

5. Methods, Means and Techniques

Self-directed approaches and individualized learning methods have received marked attention. But these methods have to be supported with learning materials and facilities. Programs that are fully individualized are difficult to devise. Self-directed methods are suitable for mature adults who are motivated to manage their own learning experience which may lead to a greater sense of responsibility in other aspects of life. However, the problem of loneliness and lack of social interaction cannot be overlooked. Organizations undertaking to encourage such style of learning would do well to find compensatory ways to make sure the educational process works well.

The value of mass media, particularly radio, was emphasized as a suitable means to convey instructional messages and as a tool for motivation. One recommendation stated that every possible measure should be taken to make the radio more accessible to the majority of the population. NGOs may not be in a position to operate or control radio stations, but they can launch educational programs in conjunction with the relevant authorities, or plan followup activities based on what has been broadcast. This type of work requires imagination, tact and foresight if it is to be done well, and likely requires a full-time staff. However, this is certainly an area for adult educators in NGOs to open constructive channels of communication with government and media people, and to ensure that the learners also have a part to play.

Related to discussions about methods are services that provide information and counselling, especially now when many adults are becoming autonomous learners. They need such services to make the correct decisions about their particualr learning activities. It was urged that such services be moved to the centre of the main work of adult education, rather than be ancillary or peripheral as they are now. To make such services function well requires co-operation and collaboration with government and other organizations at local, regional, national and international levels. First, NGOs have to admit the importance of such services, and then try to do all they can to provide and maintain them

6. Training of Personnel

Considerable attention was given to the urgent need for the training of personnel working at all levels, and to the role of NGOs in improving the quality

of training and the status of adult educators. Member States were invited to take into consideration the contribution of non-governmental organizations to the training of part-time and voluntary workers, to support their efforts in setting up training programs that have the flexibility to respond to the needs and backgrounds of the trainees, and to recognize the status of such progams. It is up to NGOs to press for relevant programs from the right quarters, to provide them where none is available, and to grant training leaves to their teachers whenever possible. Concerted efforts from several organizations, as well as cooperation with government and institutions of higher education, may prove viable in organizing such programs.

7. Resources

The spirit of sharing more than the spirit of acquiring was emphasized. Population growth has presented education with new challenges. Adults need to be educated to share resources and space, to welcome foreigners and migrants, and 'to learn to live in the city or to remain countryfolk.' Without undermining the importance of government financial support in many program areas, NGOs also may do well to identify resources, in the form of personnel and facilities, that are not being fully used in the community, and to obtain these resources through direct request or interchange agreements.

However, delegates stressed the importance of making the adult education budget a part of the overall education budget in ministries of education and in other functional ministries. The implications for NGOs would be better contacts with the functional ministries to make them realize the educational aspect of their work and the help they can draw on from NGOs to promote it through educational programs for their people. This tapping and negotiating of resources from other ministries can be time-consuming and require full-time personnel. It was pointed out that a process of social and economic accounting that takes into account the pay-off and spin-off effects of adult education activities would show savings in alternative social costs, such as lowering of crime, fire and accident rates. In the end, the true 'net costs' of the programs would be quite small. Such statistical evidence is difficult to get, but NGOs are resourcelful and may come up with some concrete arguments and persuasions along this line.

8. Co-ordination and Co-operation

Co-ordination and co-operation were looked at from local, regional, national and international levels. Often cited was the inadequate co-ordination between governmental and non-governmental organizations, and even among governmental organizations themselves. Co-ordinating bodies were suggested, but designed so they would not have a centralizing and inhibiting effect on the rich diversity of local and non-governmental forms of provision. On the international level, Unesco was urged to give support to research, to regional programs, to promote exchange among Member States

and to assist in evaluation and dissemination of information.

The implications for NGOs is to co-operate with such efforts through supplying information as well as making use of available information that is there for the asking. The essential point is for NGOs to realize that the field of adult education is global. The more they keep in touch with other organizations and nations the more effective they can be in their own work. A conscious effort to compile a file of contacts and sources of information, and to reply to questionnaires and requests for co-operation and exchange, may open up large vistas for one's own field.

9. Development, Research, Planning, Evaluation

Recommendations for development centred around practical measures to bring adult education closer to solving problems related to socio-economic, political and cultural issues in different countries. It was urged that adult education be used as a means to develop an all-round human personality, to preserve national cultures, to protect the environment, to further international understanding, peace and respect for human rights, and to overcome social injustice, prejudice, intolerance and racism. NGOs may have to broaden their program perspective and include topics related to these fundamental issues. An overhaul of programs in the light of larger issues beyond their doorsteps may bring up some useful lines of development.

In terms of research, planning and evaluation, it was recommended that more research be done on the planning and implementation of programs and on the development of criteria for their evaluation. Unesco was asked to help towards the pooling of experience at the subregional, regional, interregional and international levels. NGOs have a wealth of experience. They may need resources and expertise to formalize and operate on research questions. A sensitivity towards 'researchable' areas may give the lead to some invaluable findings for the field. NGOs may need to add the role of scientist to that of practitioner when they are engaged in their work.

10. Literacy

Illiteracy was identified as the problem plaguing developed and developing countries alike, and the objective is to eradicate it by 2000. Both governmental and non-governmental organizations were recommended to give special priority to literacy programs for young people, women, and disadvantaged groups in rural and semi-desert areas—and, to link such programs to work, culture and language. Unesco, which has been doing so much in the promotion of functional literacy, was asked to maintain its efforts. Literacy programs are difficult and costly to operate. NGOs are often less enthusiastic in embarking on such provisions unless financial resources are assured. Yet once in place, such programs can be very rewarding. Since illiteracy is one of the roots of many social problems, it is high time that NGOs make an extra effort in seeking the means to operate programs and to get their staff trained for the job.

New Trends and Developments

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Until November 1985, Mr Stock was Vice-President (Europe) of the International Council for Adult Education.

The fact that the Fourth Unesco Conference was the largest in size—by number of accredited delegates (841), by number of participating Member States (122), by number of consulting non-governmental organizations (59) — in one sense continues the trend from Elsinore in 1949, Montreal in 1960 and Tokyo in 1972. But what was a useful international gathering of committed adult education enthusiasts in 1949 became in 1985 a politicized negotiating arena about policies, influences, commitments and responsibilities. Many old-timers, recalling in a glow of nostalgia, the warm relationships and renewed solidarity of the earlier events may regret the constant and often irritating pressures upon professional committed adult educators from nation states and their plenipotentiaries. But the heady euphoria of the past had a dangerous element of self-delusion, almost fantasy, inherent within it.

Certainly on this last 1985 occasion there was less euphoria, more irritation at the ponderous procedure, more overt pressures from national governments on 'expert' delegates. It was left to the Declaration on the Right to Learn, inspired by the International Council for Adult Education, to put some heat into the stylized form of the Final Report session with its nine brittle and conflated recommendations, and its comprehensive but careful reports of Commission I and II and the plenary sessions. The diplomatic manoeuvres were further compounded on this occasion by the delicate political environment of Unesco itself following the withdrawal from membership of the United States and the notice for possible withdrawal of the United Kingdom. In such an atmosphere it might seem impossible to arrive at any worthwhile conclusions, at least conclusions *intrinsic* to the subtle process of educating adults. However, certain tendencies, amounting in part to a major predisposing factor, can be discerned. Some of these are outlined briefly.

☐ Increasing Importance of Adult Education

It may be claimed that adult education has always (at least in recent history) been important to the cultures and societies—and even governments—of many countries. Nevertheless the importance tended in the past (and with a minority of honourable exceptions) to be expressed more in the form of lip-service and

rhetoric than in the assignment of adequate resources. In the 1985 Conference, governments were never going to be pledging large increases in adult education budgets. When it became quite clear that many departments of state of most countries were now 'into' adult education, no matter that they might call it 'manpower training', 'cadre building', 'agricultural extension', 'health care.' There was evidence of a very substantial, if not yet universal, recognition that all development programs need an educational dimension if they are to have any hope of success. Moreover, this 'development' perspective now applies to many industrialized countries as they are bombarded by the impact of massive technological changes, low economic growth, major demographic variations and unavoidable social pressures.

Such acknowledgment is a long overdue recognition of the *instrumental* and *extrinsic* values of adult education; but there was also some endorsement-but limited—of the cultural and intrinsic values formerly thought to be the primary informing principles of the adult education movement. For the most part, the cynical analyst must assume that although the 'economic' and 'technical' messages about adult education are penetrating the corridors of power, the main posture of governments at the present time is that of enlightened self-interest. Where educators' principles, value-systems, moral imperatives and skills converge with governmental concerns about stability, economic growth, soaring social or health budgets, then (and there) special educational programs will flourish. By contrast, there was some evidence that when the mores of educators do -not- coincide with short- to medium-term government priorities, then there is even less chance than before for purely educational programs to survive.

☐ Importance of Non-governmental Organizations

It may be that 1985 will be remembered in the history of adult education as the year when the non-governmental organizations (NGOs) at last gained proper recognition; or perhaps, in a longer historical perspective, when the NGOs made a significant comeback. Although imprisoned in the dehumanized official language which seems to cramp the style of so many international governmental events, the messages of appreciation of the crucial roles, capabilities and therefore value of NGOs were clearly heard. As well as the traditional pioneering roles long recognized as 'appropriate' to non-governmental agencies, there was a beginning to the perception and endorsement of complementary functions in the actual delivery or programs and services. Clearly this trend needs to be carried further on both sides (that is, by non-governmental organizations as well as governmental organizations) to the point where contractual or quasi-contractual obligations can be mutually agreed and resources disbursed accordingly.

In its endorsement of the actual and potential capabilities of NGOs, the Conference may also encourage a recognition in funding bodies of the necessity for financial support for 'core' organizational activities and staffing as well as merely offering 'program' finance with or without a grudgingly negotiated

'overhead' element included. There was evidence that some of the most spectacular advances since 1972 in functional and developmental adult education had been achieved by adequately—but not over indulgently—funded non-governmental organizations. Moreover, the networks of mutual support, commitment and cooperation which many such agencies had developed, nationally, regionally and internationally, were seen to have major qualitative benefits. The slim-line structures and high work rates of many NGOs surely must be seen as crucial elements in any progress towards social improvement and the democratization of systems, not least, formal educational systems. But the goals must be mutually negotiated and agreed on bases of equity and respect; and the good will must not be cynically exploited.

☐ Literacy a Universal Necessity

It was (re)-affirmed that literacy and basic education is a universal necessity, not merely a disability suffered by the populations of Third World countries. A substantial amount of time, repetitive statements, and ingenious diplomatic word-play went into the formulations of this basic principle. When one considers the many disappointments and failures (as well as the signal triumphs) of national and international literacy campaigns in the last two decades, the reaffirmation of a *world* commitment to literacy and basic education for all was most interesting and important.

In my view, but clearly not of the majority of delegates, the expression of this fundamental educational commitment was flawed by naive notions such as 'eradicating illiteracy by 2000.' Any analysis of the evidence from both industrializd and developing countries must surely point to the necessity of maintaining a functional / numeracy / basic skills element in the national curriculum and provision of education for adults into the foreseeable future. Again, in my opinion, there was a misconception that the growth of functional adult literacy and basic educational programs in many industrialized countries is merely a species of the well-known phenomenon of regression or lapse into literacy by a minority after the great leap forward into (almost) universal literacy. By contrast, the research evidence suggests a complex web of factors intrinsic to constantly changing industrialized societies and the regrettably large inertia of the formal system, which produce functional illiterates every day. That these can often be concealed by family or community 'sheltering' or by individual protective ingenuity is irrelevant to the principles of right and self-fulfillment.

As well, there is the ever-growing and often tragic phenomenon of human migration, of political and economic refugees, and of cultural and linguistic dislocation which exert major pressures and requirements on the governments and services of 'receiving' countries.

☐ International and Regional Co-operation

'Co-operation' is not a very original exhortation at international gatherings. But content analysis of the final report and the two background documents reveals a remarkable emphasis on the need for better systems and increased

resources to enable the hard facts and information about progress (or not) in education for adults to be readily available throughout the world. Reference was made on several occasions to the ever longer intervals between Unesco-sponsored adult education conferences; and how regrettable it is that delegates probably will have to wait until 2000 before another such large-scale exchange of information and opinion could take place. (It was recommended that Unesco 'continue to convene international conferences on adult education at appropriate intervals' . . .)

While one can remark upon the sad lack of state-of-the-art knowledge by several leading 'governmental' delegates, the principle remains sound: that systems could and should be devised and sponsored which enable exchanges to be organized regionally and sub-regionally and which enable crucial documentation to reach (not to be theoretically available to) those key people in all countries who need them. One could further suggest that more generous deployment of international NGOs in respect of exchanges, workshops, key documentation, etc., might remove some of the blocks, provided that such NGO work was recognized and respected by governments, by the endorsement and support of Unesco and other international governmental organizations. Recognition of the need for more research—especially comparative research—was heartening and, in terms of Unesco's unique capabilities and resources, entirely practicable.

☐ Conclusions

There were many splendid notions and practices advocated at the Conference, and contained in its final report. These are only one delgate's identification of trends. With a healthy, revitalized Unesco structure it seems entirely feasible to handle about 80% of the calls upon the Organization within the present ground rules of the Medium-Term Plan or with minor modifications of it. The other 20% may have to go onto the back-burner for the time being. Whether the actual allocations within the strategic slots of the Plan are adequate is more difficult to judge. Better contractual relationships between Unesco and non-governmental organizations, national, regional and international, could be crucial to the maintenance of qualitative and quantitative advance in the years to the end of the century.

The paradox of the high profile of adult education as a key dimension of the development and the ever tighter squeeze on financial resources is likely to remain with us for that same period. But there is much that can be done and must be done.

Questions of Goals for Adult Education

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Dr Krajnc was re-elected in November 1985 to a second term as a member of the Executive Committee of the International Council for Adult Education.

The work of Commission I of the Unesco Conference consisted of discussion on a major and significant philosophical agenda item with the following unwieldy (and optimistic) title: 'The contribution which adult education can make to the development of active participation in economic, social and cultural life and to the solution of some of the major problems of the contemporary world.' The Commission, and its report, presupposed a twofold objective for adult education: 'achieving individual self-fulfilment and encouraging the individual to participate in socio-economic and cultural development.' Important implications and questions arise from this, some of which I shall examine from the point of view of andragogy as essential to the further development of adult education. While the twofold objective of adult education was stated often in papers presented, in discussions, and elaborated on in the Recommendations of the Conference, we must ask ourselves: *what does the practice of adult education reveal*? Practice varies greatly from country to country, but some general tendencies are visible today in certain societies which lead to a further question: *in which parts of society is adult education integrated and in which parts is it absent*?

The implications of such questions are summarized in terms of broad problems illustrated by three general tendencies.

□ *The most general tendency* in today's world is to narrow the function of adult education only to economic goals, such as productivity, employment, struggle for exports, etc. This tendency shows in some countries as the subordination of adult education to industrial needs. To narrow adult education to this extent is dangerous because it restricts and diminishes the strength and power of adult education. By its very nature adult education is multidimensional and always polyvalent, influencing social and cultural dimensions of society as well as the economic dimension. The pressure upon adult education to limit itself to economic productive outcomes leads to the crippling of adult education because it does not deal with the whole person. Attention to the entire social context must be paid in future in the setting of goals and objectives for adult education in practice.

□ *The second tendency* is to reduce the financial resources for adult education. In many countries this process goes on systematically and intentionally in spite of the general conviction that our survival and development depends upon knowledge. Why is there such a contradiction between what we proclaim and what we do? In many countries the traditional view is that adult education is merely a social expenditure. Instead adult education should be seen as a contribution to true production, an investment which creates wealth in a knowledge-based society. The traditional 'expenditure' view of adult education is dangerous because in a time of rapid change, the skills and capacities of people can regress. Precious time is being lost that should be used to restructure our economies and our cultures.

Each year nations are depending more and more upon the acquisition and dissemination of knowledge. Reducing budgets for adult education is, in many countries, actually contributing to deep crises. Should we be investing the least in what we need most? Is there an economic reason for not investing in the creation of knowledge? Are we afraid of people having knowledge? Isn't it necessary to reconsider such a regressive tendency? Adult education is not a consumer of national income. Instead, it creates and expands a nation's wealth and enables new forms of work and lifestyles.

□ We are also witnessing *a third tendency*. The more the world crisis deepens, the more education becomes 'elitist', limited only to the top social groups. This also applies to adult education. Limitations on budgets cause a limited number of enrolments in many schools and educational programs. What is easier than to leave out the broad mass of people? The number of those left without adequate education is growing in some countries. Furthermore, access to adult education is becoming more and more difficult for many people. As a report of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development states, 'adult education is reflecting, not redressing, social inequalities.'

This tendency creates another danger for adult education and its role and position in future social, cultural and economic development. No one today can afford to live in the 'luxury of ignorance'; it represents an obstacle to social development. The efficiency of adult education for further development relies upon a mass approach through which every person obtains the knowledge essential for him or her to participate fully in society. To move into the future post-industrial society depends on the education of the whole population and not just on an educated elite. Mass distance education and 'open universities' are models which should be considered.

The report of the Unesco Conference shows a great deal of work waiting to be done by adult educators. A place to start is with the clear setting of goals and objectives towards mass adult education programs open to all and implemented in a fashion sensitive to social, local and individual needs.

The Role of Government in Literacy

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Government involvement in adult education, especially in the developing countries, now concentrates mainly on literacy. However, this does not minimize te very extensive extension programs in agriculture and nutrition, material and child health and family planning, general environmental health, as well as in afforestation and soil conservation. Also, various countries, more so in the socialist ones, offer political education whether on its own or as part of the content for literacy. In any case, where the literacy program is functional, the subjects mentioned form the content. This is because the main purpose of a functional literacy program is to give the participants useful information and skills to help them cope with the needs of their daily lives.

Looking through the literature on adult education and literacy, one is impressed by the general acceptance that government will be responsible for providing literacy. It is true that many voluntary agencies are involved in literacy and that, in most countries, they were the first on the scene. Also even when governments have major programs, the voluntary agencies still are involved and doing good work. But it cannot be doubted that in most, if not all developing countries, governments are responsible for most of the provision.

Why is this so? All over the world it is accepted that illiteracy must be wiped from the face of the earth. For this to happen, illiteracy must be considered in the same way as other major undertakings. Each nation must work out concrete and workable strategies for the elimination of illiteracy. Targets must be set, resources must be committed, and structures created for this purpose. That is, efforts towards the elimination of illiteracy must be incorporated into national development plans. Also, people expect that government will provide various social services, including education. Governmental provision of such services is seen as the most direct gain from independence. Governments are expected to give these services free of charge—whatever that means, since the recipients have to give the government the resources in the first place. However, as these services benefit the poor most, then perhaps the services are free. It is one way of redistributing the resources available to the nation.

Another reason for government to be heavily involved in the provision

of social services is that these programs are very expensive. For example, government is expected to offer literacy to all who need it throughout the whole country, often at times all at once. Such a program is far beyond the means of any local non-governmental organization, even with international funding. In any case, many governments would not look too favourably at an NGO which offers such huge programs, especially with foreign assistance.

By and large, the government programs in literacy and adult education are massive and nationwide. While in some countries different regions (such as urban centres), or different groups (such as civil servants or young people) are served, first, the ultimate aim is to cover the entire country. The Udaipur Literacy Declaration of 1982 recognized the mass campaign as a strategy of 'promise' that had to be undertaken at a level of response commensurate with existing needs. Where the needs are nationwide, a program covering the whole nation would be called for. Only the government is in a position to offer such a program; and, the people see this as the government's responsibility.

There is now agreement that for literacy to succeed on a massive scale, political will is an essential starting point. That being the case, government's leadership—rather than just involvement—is a prerequisite. The inevitable competition for limited resources means that government will need to come out strongly in favour of adult literacy, always the poor brother when compared to other sectors of education. A range of methods have been tried with varying success: special legislations to provide for the program, special budgets, making attendance and/or teaching compulsory. This all goes to show the very central place in government in the provision of literacy.

Characteristics of Government Programs

Government programs have other characteristics aside from their massive nature, such as the following.

- As one might expect, adult literacy programs conducted by government are bureaucratic, with lengthy interviews, slow tendering systems, etc., that make implmentation slow and often wasteful in resources. A normal budget of a department of government could easily do twice as much work if under the control of an NGO.

- Some reasons for this apparent waste can be covered by the term 'politics.' Instead of providing a carefully set-out program, often a program is inaugurated hastily to satisfy a political whim. Although it can be argued that if such political whims did not surface occasionally many of our literacy programs would not have been born, nevertheless this is not a license for haphazard planning. With proper planning, limited resources could be better used for the benefit of all.

- Staffing is another major point of high expenditure in a government program because such a program has many reasons for its existence. In

most countries where unemployment is rampant, especially among school-leavers, employment is a major consideration in any government program. It is not unusual to find that staff who may not be actually needed by the program are employed, such as young school-leavers, even in cases where perhaps retired school teachers would have served better, or where, with a little incentive, active school teachers could have taken on literacy functions. Also, resources which could have been used to employ teachers, may be used to employ little-needed administrators. Again, before blaming such programs for misuse of limited resources through 'unwarranted' employment, one must note that government is expected to improve the employment situation of its people, especially in programs it operates.

However, despite various and obvious shortcomings of government programs, far-reaching effects of existing programs can be noted.

- Through massive-scale efforts of governments, illiteracy has been wiped out in many developing countries which were not-so-developed a few decades ago. Success in literacy has led to opportunities for further learning which has transformed such societies.
- Even in developing countries where illiteracy has been greatly pushed to a corner, it seems as if the new literates have been given a new lease of life. This is the case particularly in countries where literacy has been related closely to development in such fields as maternal and child health, agriculture or political education.
- Governments also have managed to exploit emotions connected with new national situations, such as change of system of government, and have used literacy as one of the important vehicles in changing society. The result has been the creation of a society of confident individuals who are able to express themselves, who seem to know the direction to which their nation is moving, and who have a better sense of their own roles in the development process.

IN CONCLUSION

It would not be useful or even fair to compare government programs with those offered by non-governmental organizations, although my paper seems to suggest that NGOs generally are less bureaucratic and more careful in the use of resources. But are they? Might it not be that NGOs are efficient simply because normally they are small and have a single purpose? If an NGO became really large, would it not create bureaucratic procedures that would also result in inefficiency? Is it really possible to replicate pilot (or small) projects into national progams with any hope of remaining efficient in the use of resources? Despite the shortcoming expressed in this paper, it seems that the efforts of governments are not irreplaceable. In many countries governmental efforts and commitment have transformed their societies, a phenomenon which would not have been possible otherwise.

Implications for North Americans

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In 1984, adult educators at the annual conference of the American Association of Adult Continuing Education (AAACE) attempted to use what influence they wielded to have the United States reconsider its announcement to leave Unesco by 31 December, 1985. Since this withdrawal, Canadian adult educators have worked hard for assurance from their government that Canada would remain in Unesco. The decision of the United States was based on such overt reasons as poor management of the agency, attempts to politicize issues, and the effort to create a new information order. As a member of the delegation of the International Council for Adult Education to the Conference, representing the AAACE, I found that the latter effort, which aimed at control of the international press by national governments, had been quickly disposed of.

As for the concern about poor management, by talking with devoted Unesco supporters from other countries, I learned that the agency was wasting some of its resources to satisfy the ideosyncracies of its Director General relating to his personal housing and the concentration of staff at the Paris headquarters. I discovered that this staff was enjoying tax-free salaries amid the splendours of Paris instead of working in Third World countries with fewer amenities. Upon reflection, I came to believe that the banishment of such irritants is certainly important, but that their presence did not justify the withdrawal of the United States.

I also sought more information about the third reason—the politicization of Unesco. Since this was the first conference to convene since the American withdrawal, I believed that it would supply some interesting insights into the issue. I learned that when 539 delegates representing 122 countries congregate, along with some 300 others representing non-governmental organizations, observers from non-member states, and representatives from national liberation movements, the world political situation inevitably is reflected in the varying ideologies.

The absence of an official American delegation caused sadness among some Third World delegates. They expressed their apprehension about a leadership vacuum in the West, and concern that the Soviet Union would gain more influence and control over future programs. Some Western delegates shared this concern, although their attitude was tempered by the knowledge that Third

World countries are sensing their power for the first time and exercising it through voting. The politicization issue may be a covert one relating chiefly to loss of control by the United States.

This empowerment perspective was addressed by Ian Morrison, Executive Director of the Canadian Association for Adult Education, in an article for a Canadian newspaper, *The Globe and Mail*, 28, May 1985: *Unesco ... operates on the principle of one country, one vote ... Over four decades, a 'first world' intellectual club has become a truly world-scale organization, reflecting the priorities of the majority—the Third World ... Mr. M'Bow, of Senegal, caters to the priorities of the majority. Africa and the Third World are better represented by Unesco's leadership and decision-making than any other international organization.*

Thoughts about the American withdrawal occupied my mind during the Conference. Information discussions with Third World delegates often opened with the remark: *You're American! I thought that the United States had pulled out of Unesco.* I would explain that I represented the American association as an ICAE delegate. My response was met with an attitude of helplessness and frustration, expressed as follows. *Your country has both money and power. Why not give us the dignity of the word? It is only through an international agency like Unesco that we can be assured of a forum in which to practice a multilateral policy. We don't want the bilateral or unilateral agreements that your government suggests.*

Additional concern was expressed about the inevitable reduction in programs because of the loss of American funding. (Other Americans who were non-governmental delegates reported similar experiences: Dr Alexander Charters, Syracuse University; Dr Richard Hedstrom, Brigham Young University; and Dr William Rivera, University of Maryland.)

ORGANIZATION AND WORK OF THE CONFERENCE

The American withdrawal and the absence of a delegation, coupled with the intent of Great Britain to withdraw at the end of 1985, created a strained atmosphere. Director-General M'Bow, in contrast to his usual impassioned style, was low-keyed as he welcomed delegates and outlined their tasks. The Conference format included plenary sessions and open meetings of two commissions. Some agenda items were covered in plenary; others were discussed by the commissions. It is worth noting that the working document on activities by Member States since the 1972 Tokyo conference demonstrates a major strength of Unesco's role in being able to gather such data from around the world.

The plenary sessions were to enable Member States and delegations from non-governmental organizations to present reports and to focus on such specific concerns as the extension of literacy work, adult education as a factor in the democratization of education and ways and means to improve regional and international cooperation. However, the national reports to the plenary often exceeded the allotted time and tended to concentrate more on

descriptions keyed to the bolstering of national pride than to analysis of needs on which to base policy. One reason might be that many smaller countries were conscious of having a forum in which to air their achievements.

A substantial part of the Conference's deliberations took place during the meetings of two commissions, each dealing with specific agenda items. *Commission I* dealt with 'The Contribution which Adult Education can make to the Development of Active Participation in Economic, Social and Cultural Life and to the Solution of some of the Major Problems of the Contemporary World.' The global nature of this topic hampered the efforts of participants to focus on specific needs, such as those of young people who left school early and have been unable to find employment, and the education of women. Discussions centred on the role and objectives of adult education, programs, methods and international cooperation. The meetings were not characterized by bold new ideas, but focused mainly on past experiences and vague suggestions for improvement.

In contrast, *Commission II* had a specific charge under two items: 'Ways and Means of Extending and Improving Adult Education' and 'Measures for the Advancement of Regional and International Cooperation in Adult Education.' Accordingly, its report offers a synthesis, or state-of-the-art summary, with respect to delegates' views on contents, methods and techniques, provision of guidance services, research and documentation, training, links between adult education and formal education, issues for a global approach to illiteracy (including both developing and industrialized countries), planning and financing, and ways to promote and encourage cooperation.

The International Council for Adult Education was a key non-governmental organization, sharing the expertise of its delegates with national delegations who were writing recommendations. To prepare for this task, ICAE delegates met a day early at the Paris headquarters of Peuple et Culture, its French member association. During the Conference, small teams of Council delegates met regularly to produce working papers and draft recommendations. The Council was charged with the task of developing the statement on The Right to Learn, presented to the plenary by its president, Dame Nita Barrow, into a declaration that was unanimously adopted, on the final day as the Declaration of the Conference. I was impressed by the broad spectrum of representation of those in ICAE's delegation and by the collaborative approach taken to seek a variety of views before drafting working papers, recommendations and the final form of the Declaration. These achievements attest to the importance and contribution of non-governmental organizations.

The final plenary session was for delegates to approve the draft of the final report based on a synthesis of deliberations, and the ensuing recommendations. It was interesting to learn more about behind-the-scenes politics; Canada's familiar role in forging compromise recommendations in the drafting committee; and the Nordic countries' proposed united front on conference issues, a task made difficult by concern for reactions back home to the Conference deliberations.

Readers of the Conference's final report will find that its recommendations are grounded on the 1972 Tokyo report, which emphasized lifelong learning through both formal and nonformal adult education, the democratization of access, and recognition of the importance of non-governmental organizations. Recommendations from the 1985 Conference provide Member States with useful guidelines for policy formation in such areas as defining the role of adult education; determining necessary legislation and finance; promoting use of media and methods; ensuring training; recognizing the needs of special groups (women, elderly, youth, minorities, migrant workers, the disadvantaged, those threatened by famine); the complementary nature of relationships between formal and nonformal education; international cooperation; and the importance of evaluation and research. A significant point about literacy is that a coherent national language policy, involving initial learning in the mother tongue (often a regional dialect), is not enough. This initial education should be supplemented by education in languages of national concern and even of international communication. Another point was the acknowledgment of professionalism and the need to train adult educators.

A NECESSARY FORUM FOR INTERNATIONAL UNDERSTANDING

My initial concern when reflecting on the implications of the Conference for North American adult educators was that the ideas generated would not reach the United States. Moreover, the valuable international networks that had been forged over four decades with American help are seriously threatened at a critical period in adult education. Everywhere, nations are realizing its importance in every aspect of a country's progress. Yet, the United States now is cut off from the international dialogue that combats isolationism and furthers understanding of other cultures. Bilateral and unilateral agreements may address specific agendas, but they can never provide the forum that is necessary if nations are to cooperate in this global world.

Other important implications include the inevitable cutbacks relating to publications that address issues beyond national boundaries, and to the dissemination of research. I also pondered the loss of opportunities for the informal sharing of ideas among representatives of the West and East and of the North and South. Unesco offers an unusual neutral character where members can meet from such politically different, yet culturally related, countries as East and West Germany and North and South Korea. For all these reasons, I believe that American adult educators should pledge themselves to begin lobbying immediately for the United States to rejoin Unesco. I hope that Canadian adult educators will urge their government to continue, even strengthen, its constructive leadership in Unesco. Such efforts are crucial to the survival of Unesco as a unique force in the furtherance of international understanding.

Declaration on the Right to Learn

A statement calling for renewed commitment to the Right to Learn, based on the speech by Nita Barrow, president of the International Council for Adult Education, was adopted unanimously as the Declaration of the Unesco Fourth International Conference on Adult Education.

Recognition of the right to learn is now more than ever a challenge for humanity. The right to learn is:

— the right to read and write;

— the right to question and analyze;

— the right to imagine and create;

— the right to read one's world and to write history;

— the right to have access to educational resources;

— the right to develop individual and collective skills.

The Paris Conference on Adult Education reaffirms the importance of this right.

The right to learn is not a cultural luxury to be saved for some future date.

It is not the next step to be taken once basic needs have been satisfied.

The right to learn is an indispensable tool for the survival of humanity.

If we want the peoples of the world to be self-sufficient in food production and other essential needs, they must have the right to learn.

If women and men are to enjoy better health, they must have the right to learn.

If we are to avoid war, we must learn to live in peace, and learn to understand one another.

'Learn' is the key word.

There can be no human development without the right to learn.

There can be no breakthroughs in agriculture and industry, no progress in community health and, indeed, no change in learning conditions without the right to learn.

Without this right there will be no improvements in the standards of living for workers in our cities and villages.

In short, the right to learn is one of the best contributions we can make to solve the crucial problems of humanity today.

But the right to learn is not only an instrument of economic development; it must be recognized as one of the fundamental rights. The act of learning, lying as it does at the heart of all educational activity, changes human beings from objects at the mercy of events to subjects who create their own history.

It is a fundamental human right whose legitimacy is universal: the right to learn cannot be confined to one section of humanity: it must not be the exclusive privilege of men, or of the industrialized countries, or the wealthy classes, or those young people fortunate enough to receive schooling.

The Paris conference calls on all countries to implement this right and to create the necessary conditions for its effective exercise by all, by making available all necessary conditions for its effective exercise by all, by making available all necessary human and material resources, rethinking education systems along more equitable lines and, finally, drawing on the resources that have been successfully developed by various communities.

We urge all organizations, both governmental and non-governmental, to work with the United Nations, Unesco and other specialized agencies to promote this right on a world scale.

In spite of the great progress in adult education that has been recorded at consecutive Unesco conferences, in Elsinore, Montreal, Tokyo and Paris, the chasm has not narrowed between, on the other hand, the scale and complexity of the problems, and, on the other, the ability of individuals and groups to find appropriate solutions.

The Fourth International Conference on Adult Education, meeting at Unesco Headquarters in March 1985, repeats the appeal made at previous conferences, calling on all countries, despite or indeed because of the scale of contemporary problems, to make a determined and imaginative effort to bring about the intensive and specific development of adult education activities, so that women and men, both individually and collectively, can equip themselves with the educational, cultural, scientific and technological resources necessary for a type of development whose aims, requirements and practical procedures they themselves have chosen.

This conference recognizes and acclaims the energy and the trends in human relations that women and their organizations have contributed. Their specific experiences and methods are central to the fundamental issues on which the future of humanity depends, such as peach and equality between women and men. This being the case, women's participation is essential in the development of adult education and in plans to bring about a more human society.

Who will decide what humanity will become in the future? This is the question facing all governments, non-governmental organizations, individuals and groups. This, too, is the question facing the women and men who are working in adult education and who seek to enable all people, ranging from individuals to groups to humanity as a whole, to gain control of themselves and of their own destiny.

DOCUMENTS AVAILABLE

The following documents of the Unesco Conference are available in six languages (Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian, Spanish) in limited quantities and upon request from the Section of Adult Education, Unesco, Place de Fontenoy, 75700 Paris, France.

- *The Developement of Adult Education: Aspects and Trends* (ED-85/CONF. 210/3). Summary of information and data from Member States, regional consultations, ICAE Conference, Paris 1985.

- *Adult Education since the Third International Conference on Adult Education Roundup of Replies to Survey carried out by Unesco among National Commissions with a view to gathering information on the development of Adult Education* (ED-85/CONF. 210/4).

- *Fourth International Conference on Adult Education* (Paris, 19-29 March 1985) *Final Report.* (Includes Declaration on the Right to Learn).